

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 3 F

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Is it necessarily sinful to help out the CIA?

A LOT OF READERS, I suspect, are disturbed about the stories that have broken in the last few days, disclosing the collaboration of Stanford professors with the CIA between 1953 and 1961.

I am disturbed too, but probably not for the reason others are.

What bothers me is not the substance of the disclosures. Rather, it is the between-the-lines suggestion that anyone who ever helped the CIA out is somehow unethical, sinister and suspect.

Last week's stories, involving a couple of former professors in the Stanford School of Medicine, are only the latest in a rash of such reports. Some of them involve practitioners of my own profession, journalism.

Carl Bernstein, the former Washington Post reporter of Watergate fame, reportedly will tell in the upcoming issue of Rolling Stone how "more than 400 American journalists secretly carried out assignments for the CIA during the past 25 years."

It is the rhetoric of such reports that I find disturbing. One headline says, "Journalists Accused of Secretly Helping the CIA." Why should it be an "accusation," not just a "fact"?

Another story says the retired president of Copley News Service "denied the charges." Even if the reports are true, why should they be considered "charges" that must be "denied"—like taking a bribe from Korea, or child molesting? What's to feel guilty about?

Dr. Marion Smith, a Stanford researcher concerned with the effects of alcohol, said quite sensibly last week she was "not particularly outraged" to discover belatedly that the CIA had paid for her work. My question is, why does the issue even arise? Why should she (or anyone) be outraged? If her research was honest (and no one says it wasn't), does it really make a difference whether it was funded by the CIA, the National Institutes of Health, the Ford Foundation, or the Starnford Research Institute?

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AT THIS POINT, I would emphasize that I'm as upset as anybody when I read testimony that the CIA tried to assassinate Fidel Castro or had a hand in the death of Salvador Allende. We have no business bumping off anybody we're not at war with. It is not only immoral and criminal; it undermines our credibility and our historic tradition of decent deal-

ings with the world.

If I were president, I'd lower the boom on most of the CIA's "dirty tricks." However, I'd want the damndest intelligence-gathering operation you ever saw, with agents planted everywhere. I'd take a "city editor" approach, wanting to know everything that was happening all over, so we could never be caught off guard. I'd be more interested in hard military and technological information—troop strength, logistics, weapons, research—than in idle political gossip.

In between the extremes of "dirty tricks" and the pure intelligence function, I suspect I'd also authorize "my" CIA to indulge in behind-the-scenes political maneuvering on the world stage, but only when it was crucial and gave promise of a big payoff in our national interest.

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IN TODAY'S CONTEXT, it's understandable why any university (or any news organization for that matter) might adopt rules to prohibit, or at least control, secret collaboration with our national intelligence apparatus. Stanford banned secret research in 1969.

Ideally, both the campus and the

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